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WOLF IN THE ORANGE GROVE

Surrounded by KTMs Eli Tomac bursts through and capped a sometimes shaky Lucas Oil Outdoor season to confirm the number one plate at the series closer at Iron Man. It was Kawasaki's first championship since the days of RV

Photo by Cudby/Shepherd



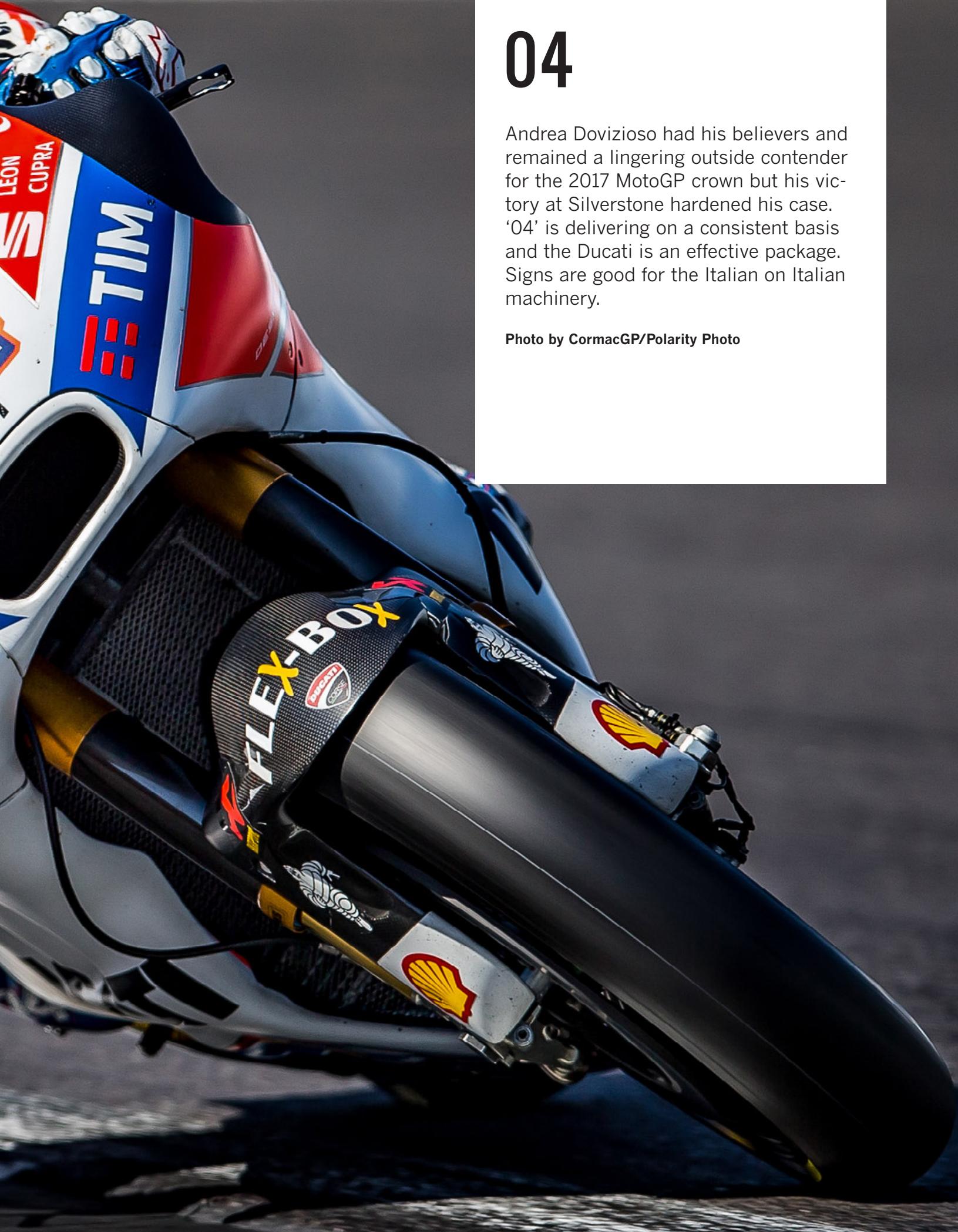
MotoGP



04

Andrea Dovizioso had his believers and remained a lingering outside contender for the 2017 MotoGP crown but his victory at Silverstone hardened his case. '04' is delivering on a consistent basis and the Ducati is an effective package. Signs are good for the Italian on Italian machinery.

Photo by CormacGP/Polarity Photo



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IN THE GROOVE

Jeffrey Herlings certainly made his mark on American audiences last weekend and we analyse the impact of his 1-1 at the Ironman National in an MXGP Blog. There is no doubt that #84 will be confident for this weekend's USGP but Eli Tomac will also be looking for revenge (while Tony Cairoli looks for a title)

Photo by Cudby/Shepherd

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OCTO BRITISH GRAND PRIX

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MotoGP winner: Andrea Dovizioso, Ducati

Moto2 winner: Takaaki, Nakagami, Kalex

Moto3 winner: Aron Canet, Honda



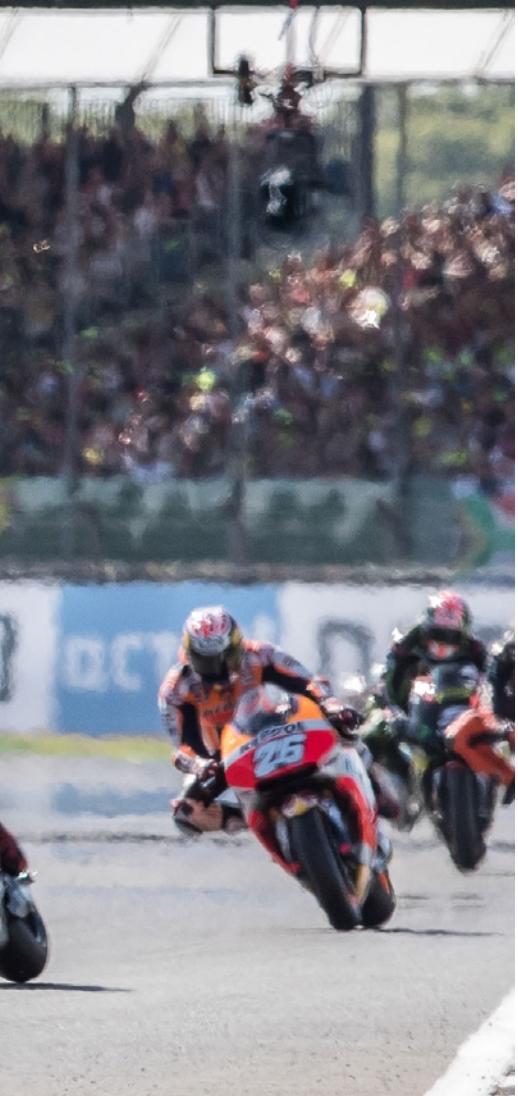


MotoGP GBR

RIDING THE BUMPS

Words by Adam Wheeler
Photos by CormacGP/Polarity Photo





Nothing was quite as it seemed at Silverstone. In the same way that Andrea Dovizioso knowingly shook his head for a TV interview in Parc Ferme (after his fourth victory this year allowed him to become the most successful rider in MotoGP this term) and said something to the ilk that qualification pace was no indicator to race performance there were other revelatory aspects: from the juddering nature of the abused Silverstone tarmac that made for spectacular slow-motion TV pictures, the excellent level of organisation at the circuit and the 'festival' feel with vast music stage busy with acts and Day of the Champions activities from Thursday to Sunday night

(James Toseland closing the book on the eighteenth Grand Prix at Silverstone since 1977) and of course three days of warm and sunny weather that somewhat defied the odds.

The little surprises continued in the results. Takaaki Nakagami proving that his MotoGP move with LCR Honda for 2018 might not be such a long shot with a confident run to a first Moto2 win in over a year after Alex Marquez looked to have done most of the work before sliding down to fourteenth ("He's fast and I know he's fast on a MotoGP bike," Cal Crutchlow said of the incoming Japanese. "I hope he brings that [the speed] from the last time he rode it on to next year.") Moto3 was typical bedlam but confusion briefly reigned on a last lap red flag that stilted the adrenaline-fuelled push of more than ten riders and awarded a fourth podium trip to seventeen year old Aron Canet. Then of course there was the first HRC factory engine failure in a race in ten years as Marc Marquez locked-up and skidded straight on at Hangar while Dani Pedrosa failed to conquer the bumps for the longest weekend of his season to-date.

Like the nature of MotoGP 2017 so far there was little correctly forecast about the British weekend.

Dovizioso was 10-9-4-2-6 in the sessions and then 8th fastest in warm-up. He was there or there-abouts but the extent of the Ducati's horsepower and how he could drive and then brake into Stowe – gaining two positions there alone on his drift to the front – was an unknown quantity. He timed the race superbly and then was too quick for a surging Viñales (back to impressive form and looking at though some valuable gains were made at the Misano test a week earlier) on the final lap. Like Jorge Lorenzo says "the championship is getting even closer now. We have an amazing new championship, so it's very difficult to predict. The same that happened to Marc can happen to another rider, someone can crash, someone can suffer a lot with the tyres, so anything can happen."

From the depths of a busy paddock in Northamptonshire here are some of the talking points and topics from the twelfth round of eighteen.



BUMP, BUMP, BUMP

Upon entering Silverstone you drive across what would have been the 'Daily Express' bridge and the fast drop down directly into Woodcote corner. The old place must have been fearsome to tackle on a 500cc Grand Prix bike and the imagination easily wanders when it comes to the sight of 2017 MotoGP machinery on the former layout. Now the original airfield and the home of British F1 has been butchered on almost every turn; only Maggotts (Turn2) and Hangar Straight remain from the original configuration and at almost 6km the lap is one of the longest in MotoGP. The combo of largely flat quick kinks and slow curves means that it has a special character. "Compared with a lot of other places there are quite a lot of tricks you can use at this place," said Cal Crutchlow who took a WorldSBK double there prior to his transfer to MotoGP and also satisfied the masses with second spot in 2016. "This circuit is so different so it is impossible to try anything," commented Marc Marquez on Thursday ahead of a long weekend of set-up work.

The main issue for the riders was the quantity of bumps.

The rippling tarmac was a head and hand ache in 2016 and pre-event fears of worse conditions were outlined by Andrea Dovizioso.

"I don't think it will be a big problem for our bike but we need to look at the track this year because Formula One has a lot more down force compared to last year," the Ducati man said.

"They have resurfaced a couple of corners but they are probably as bumpy as they were last year," Crutchlow observed on Thursday. "As Dovi said the downforce that the F1 cars have now...Spielberg [Red Bull Ring, site of the previous round] was a joke. Even down the straight the thing was vibrating and bouncing."

"Turn 9! Watch Moto3 bikes there: I could not even watch the screen," he later commented on Friday afternoon.

Suffering most was Dani Pedrosa. "I couldn't control the bike and it was shaking all around," the Jerez winner said before barely hiding his contempt for enquiries about his weight and build being an issue yet again. "It was moving so much I couldn't even see the track and not a single lap was fine. As I touch a bump the bike is crazy, super-wild and the problem just gets bigger after the first shock."

"It keeps waving more and more. It is difficult to keep the throttle open and the rear wheel down. Today was really hard and I didn't enjoy a single lap."

Danilo Petrucci barely had time to explore his capacities around the course after Andrea Iannone managed another one of his spectacular take-outs. The amusing Italian (Petrucci that is, wholly intentionally) knew Silverstone meant a weekend of work before a wheel had turned. "This track is very difficult because it is very long," he said. "Maybe you are very good in the first part, but in the middle you struggle a lot. I remember from my 'personal data recording' it is very physically demanding on the arms."

Pedrosa might have labelled Friday one of the "worst days of the year" but his teammate was less dramatic, both of his engine misfortune and the state of Silverstone. Marquez was convinced about the need for further revision of the tarmac if MotoGP returns in 2018 however. "In the safety commission we will ask again for resurface because it is one of the worst of the calendar," the World Champion exclaimed.





BACK TO THE FUTURE FOR LOWES

Some sympathy for Sam Lowes. Rather than dealing with questions of his current plight the soon-to-be 27 year old has faced weeks of inquisition about his slightly longer-term future and the roots of falling out of favour with an Aprilia project that is looking a tad unstable.

At his home round the Moto2 race winner seemed to confirm that a return to the intermediate class is all but agreed and the Interwetten team had moved quickly to replace MotoGP EG 0,0 Marc VDS-bound-Thomas Lüthi with his signature, according to an interview given to broadcaster BT Sport. Rumours of whether the crew will switch from Kalex to WP/KTM technology were prevalent and not denied by the Austrians as they looked to

expand beyond Aki Ajo's official effort of Miguel Oliveira and Brad Binder. Lowes fielded a raft of questions on Thursday and talked of his emotions and mindset at a round that would end with another trip to the gravel but with the onward path looking slightly brighter.

Were you emotionally drained after Austria and when the news broke that you would be with Aprilia in MotoGP next year?

Has it been hard to focus when everyone's asking 'what's next'?

Yeah, of course, and that's normal. OK, I won't be in MotoGP but the situation is what it is, and I have a lot of people to prove wrong and a lot to prove to myself. If I can go to another championship – obviously the first choice is Moto2 – and fight for the title and prove that I can still win and get my spot back in MotoGP then that's the target at the moment and luckily because it is only a year since I was in Moto2 and doing quite a good job I have options; and I am happy about that and grateful. If I can go into a winning team then it will be a good situation.

Is it reassuring to go back to somewhere where you have excelled before?

I'll explain it like this: I've had a lot of meetings in the last eighteen months and in Austria I had three meetings and a phone call from Moto2 teams wanting me. I spoke on the phone with a Moto2 Team Manager for three minutes, put the phone down and it was the first time I felt that I'd been spoken to in a really good, positive way for quite a while and it was a great feeling. I want to go back, earn that respect and come back to MotoGP as a World Champion and if I don't do that then I don't deserve to come back and I accept that...

About my future? Not really because the uncertainty has been going on for a while. It was OK. It was not really relief but 'knowing' what is happening next. I won't be in this team next year and I was upset because I don't start a project not to finish it. But overall I feel quite relaxed and confident that the future will bring better things.

but if I go back to Moto2 and win the World Championship then I think I deserve another shot. If it happens I can hold my head high and if it doesn't then it won't be for the lack of trying. It is a nice situation to be in but I'm not trying to make it sound better than being in MotoGP – it would have been great to be successful and stay there – but good things can come out of it.

Do you have a chassis preference?

Erm...what I want is to go back and feel wanted – this is the first thing – and prove to myself that I can do a job. Right now we have three main options with three different chassis and you can probably guess what they are. I want to be in the best situation to fight for the world championship. Moto2 is a tough class and I have been there before and know how hard it is. I'm not talking out of line when I say if I went back there I'd be in with a chance of winning. It is not being unrealistic and the decision will be with someone who will be behind me. The preference is more on the situation than the chassis but there are a lot of chassis that will do the job. There are two that I'm favouring now. The goal is to come back to MotoGP so if I could have something that ties it in then great, if not then I will just go there to try and win.

Did Aprilia offer a SBK ride? No. I would consider Super-bike but my heart says stay here and prove to myself that I can do it. A good Super-bike offer? Why not? I could go there and beat Alex [his Yamaha-mounted brother] and settle the score once and for all! I'm lucky to have a couple of options there which I didn't expect to have, especially in the last couple of days, but my priority is to go to Moto2 and fight.

Of course Aprilia have swapped Brit for Brit with a contract for Scott Redding and his fourth team in the premier class. Redding is still only 24 years old and the Aprilia deal sees a return to the Gresini set-up with whom he steered a Honda in 2014. Aprilia will be his third different bike. "I'm really happy with it," #45 said of the change. "I almost signed with Aprilia three years ago but I didn't feel like the bike was really ready. And I wasn't ready to develop a bike from zero. Now I look at it and I should have taken the pay, gone there and developed the bike! But I was young, I wanted results. But now to have that opportunity again with the bike in its third year and you see some quite big steps, consistency improving, getting closer; I'm quite happy to go there. I like the style of the bike, when I see it on track it works well."

Redding was quick to offer a degree of solidarity for Lowes' predicament and the early end of a two-year agreement. The Englishman himself was in similar contract mire with Marc VDS at the end of 2015 but it was Redding that wanted to depart the Honda. "With Sam it's hard to develop a bike when you haven't ridden another MotoGP bike," he assessed. "I've been to Honda, I've been to Ducati and I can use a bit of information from both to help. We have to see where it goes from there."

"The results from Aleix [Espargaro] are not too bad. Like I say it's a difficult situation for Sam trying to develop, trying to make results. There's too much load on his shoulders. That's why I think I'll be good for the job."





More British scrutiny was going on within the opulence of the Red Bull hospitality unit. After Mika Kallio's charge in Austria and Pol Espargaro's improving pace the results and speed of Bradley Smith were being analysed more carefully by the Austrian top brass. Smith has already been allocated a new Crew Chief (Esteban Garcia) in Silverstone where it was hoped that his work with Kallio would rub-off on the 26 year old. Brad cut a calm and careful figure in the heat of his home round but the questions of how the landscape looked in orange frequently bubbled under the surface. He was quizzed quite thoroughly on Thursday about a tricky season of adaption and where a best result of 13th had yet to be matched and with only 8 points on the board.

So, a new crew chief...?

I do have a new crew chief for the rest of the year. It will be Esteban Garcia. The main reason is that KTM would like my results to improve. They believe this is the best way to make sure that happens this season.

Do you agree with the change?

I follow whatever their decisions are. At the end of the day, when I look at what Pit [Beirer] has managed, over the course of his career - and what he continues to manage - I go with whatever that guy honestly thinks. He analysed both Brno and Spielberg and made the decision on Sunday night after Spielberg. I don't question anything, if that's what that guy observes and believes and I'll follow whatever that plan is. Esteban has been moved over from the test team. He was Mika Kallio's crew chief at both Sachsenring and Spielberg.

BRADLEY UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT

He's been working with the project since the beginning. He'll be taking care of me. He's been involved since day one.

So it's a different way of working from here?

To be honest, we worked together already in Misano on Monday. Really, it's not a big difference in the way of working. I mean, each person has their own ideas. The wealth of knowledge Esteban has, because he's been through the last 20 months of development with KTM with many different test riders – I think he worked with four test riders last year – he's seen that development process go through. His wealth of knowledge is pretty impressive. His way of working is logical, like most crew chiefs.

He did a great job in Spielberg and KTM wanted to implement that for me. I feel lucky they have done that. Let's see how the rest of the season goes.

Was there something missing with the setting that was holding you back?

I wouldn't say that something was missing. I'm not one to shy away and I think I've always had a relationship with people inside KTM, where I could tell them honestly. But something wasn't working. The results weren't coming so it's a process of elimination. I felt that there has been a lot of that process over the last three or four races. There are certain things I've been asked about how I do things, and this is just another part of that process of elimination to make sure the results will come.

Will you be in that process as well?

I think that's always a possibility and I don't shy away from that. But I also understand that if my ability isn't enough to take this project forward then – not that you would stand aside – I would understand enough to go, 'You know what? I'm not the right person.' But I wouldn't be sitting here if I thought that's the situation that we're in. I just hope that this change will be a chance to put all those doubts and questions away.

The fact this bike needs to be ridden in an aggressive way. Has that been hard for you? I think it was an aspect I struggled with probably for the first six days on the bike. Since then it disappeared. If you're not able, at this level, to adapt to new machinery quite quickly, I'd be quite disappointed. I wouldn't say that's the issue at this moment, no.

Do these measures seem a bit harsh to you?

No. The expectation is there from everybody involved: from myself but also from the main sponsors, so on and so forth. I mean, Mika couldn't have picked a better race to make us all look stupid because there were a lot of guys there! It was a phenomenal race. I'm going to say it, but Pol got off lucky. His brake broke on lap two and he didn't have to come to the end of the race and get an arse whooping by the test rider. There's no way he would have followed. Hand on my heart - he didn't have a chance. Mika's form that day was phenomenal. It will be interesting to see Mika's wildcard, which I think is going to be in Aragon. We'll see how we go.

You've gone through this before at Tech 3. Do you feel well equipped to deal with this pressure?

Yeah and honestly, if I sat here and thought that I didn't have it in me, I'd be worried. But I know it's there and I know we need to implement things in the right way. I've done this process many times. I just think that after reassessing everything, and having this reshuffle, and the KTM deciding what's going on with my side of the garage, now's the time to move forward.



KTM images

MotoGP GBR









WHAT NOW FOR BRITAIN??

There were aspects of the British Grand Prix that were stunning: the Moto3 action, the weather, the general vibe around MotoGP and the hope mainly directed at Cal Crutchlow and the possibility he could end a forty year old dry spell of a Brit cresting the top step in the premier division of Grand Prix. The overall attendance hovered at 73,000 for both 2015 (which was wet) and 2016 but dropped to just over 56,000 last Sunday. The forecast was certainly not a factor but the most obvious cause could have been ticket prices with a family of four looking at a fee of 270 pounds if they made a late call to visit on race day. Entrance for kids was steep at 45 pounds and defining a junior between 2-15 years was ridiculous.

"Probably too expensive if you ask me," said Scott Redding when asked about the indifference in the stadium seats for the 2017 incarnation.

"It's nothing to do with the racing, we've got the best racing we have had for years, in all of the classes. But I just think - from what I hear from word of mouth - is that the tickets are quite expensive here, and it's a lot of money. If you want to come here with the whole family, it'll cost you a couple of hundred pounds. Without somewhere to stay, and food, etc. So for me, that's why. It's a lot to do with that, because the racing's great."

Redding did remark that he felt Silverstone looked busy and there was certainly a packed paddock but TV pictures were generous with the bare grandstands. "I have to say that it looked less than last year but I had great support," voiced Cal Crutchlow.

"I'm annoyed I could not finish the job off and get on the podium like last year but we have to take credit – like all the riders – because we were way-faster than last year's race pace.

I did a 2.02.6 in the race last year and I did a 2.02.8 on the last lap and I was cruising around. All the guys at the front rode well and we should be pleased because we put on a show for the crowd as best as possible."

With the Circuit of Wales stuck in the realms of fantasy, Silverstone plugging the gap since 2010 and Donington Park in new ownership, the next step for the British Grand Prix hovers in mid-air. Dorna CEO Carmelo Ezpeleta headed to Thailand this week with the goal to take the series to another sphere of Asia and the course at Buriram trialled by WorldSBK, and British fans can only hope that an October triple now rising to a 'quartet' won't be at the expense of a race that has been part of the FIM World Championship since the first year.

MotoGP GBR

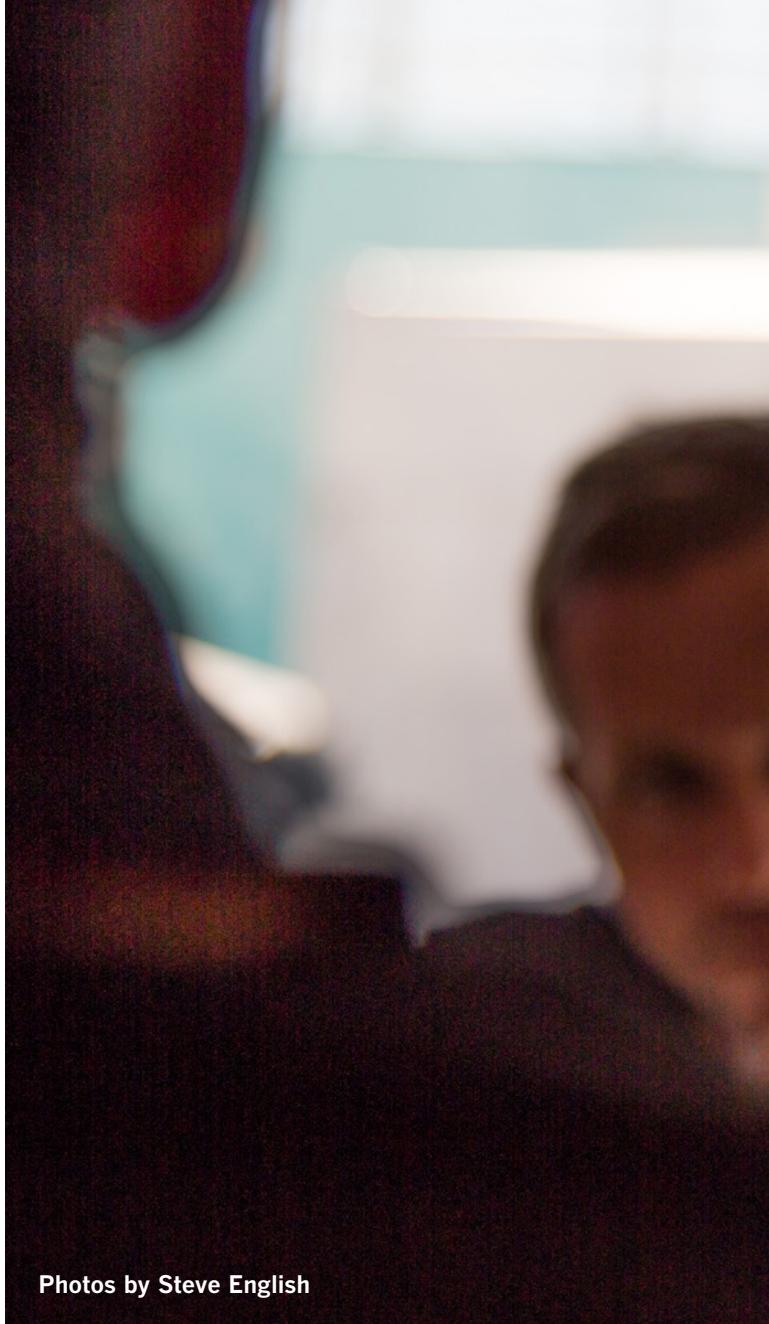


STAR POWER: JR ON THE QT

He's used to attention but **Jonathan Rea** was feted as much as any of the MotoGP stars at Silverstone as the double world champion (who looks good for a historic hatrick) paid a swift visit over the weekend. The articulate Kawasaki rider – who shone brightly in MotoGP replacement rides for Repsol Honda in 2012 but was overlooked for a saddle – held court for journalists at Alpinestars and commented on a range of subjects, including a possible way back to MotoGP. Here are some highlights courtesy of **Steve English...**

On 'using' his GP visit and the didactic worth...

It's been good because I could spend some time and watch what riders are doing and I've actually learned some things just by watching how some of these guys work. At the November test in Jerez last year the WorldSBK riders were able to share the track with a lot of Grand Prix riders so I was able to ride with them and compare where a MotoGP bike makes its lap-time and where a Superbike makes its time. That was really interesting for me but standing trackside and watching then it was the lean angle that these guys carry. The elbow-down style doesn't really work on a Superbike as much because unless you have the leverage like a [Loris] Baz or [Scott] Redding we can't carry that angle. I was watching through Vale and Club during qualifying and Marc's lean angle through the long right was incredible. We don't have that grip with our tyre because the Pirelli makes it's performance with grip on acceleration. We focus on stopping the bike to the apex and then picking up and accelerating. Compared to the GP bikes at Jerez they carry more lean and roll into the corners a lot more than we do. They don't stop or accelerate particularly fast but they can carry so much more momentum than us. You work with what works best for your tyres.



Photos by Steve English

A verdict on the polarizing two-day format for WorldSBK...

It's easy to criticize from the outside but at the races the attendance is improving, especially on Saturday, and in Italy the Superbike profile is getting bigger and bigger because Mediaset do a great job trackside. I think that the biggest problem is the gap between Kawasaki and Ducati and the rest. It's an uncertain period because of the proposed rule changes and nobody really knowing what way they will be. I've been on both sides of the grid with a competitive bike and also one where you're trying to catch up. It'd be good to ask Bradl, Lowes or Van der Mark about how different their Suzuka bikes are to the WorldSBK machines.

I think that if the plan is to make the bikes closer to stock than it's better to encourage the other manufacturers to spend more money on WorldSBK. I've no doubt that at the moment there are two teams that are taking it seriously. From the start of Superbikes it was about production bikes but then in the Foggy era it became more specialised. It was around then that Honda took it very seriously with the RC45 and that type of homologation special. It was production-based but a special bike. It's no different now but it's also important to know that Superbike is in an era where it is more standard than ever. Something needs to happen though but whether it's a Superbike or a stock bike I'll be there to race it. The guys at the front are going really fast. Chaz, myself, Melandri, Tom are all going fast but the gap to the rest is too big.

On his future and MotoGP...

I have one more year with Kawasaki and while I don't want to race too long I think that another two year contract would be perfect. I'm riding better than I ever have. I think that experience counts for an awful lot in racing. It was a nice feeling to walk down pitlane and have a lot of people that I respect say 'you should be here.' It's nice to hear that but these guys are the best in the world. To come here and compare myself to them I'd need the right equipment and I wouldn't come here 'just to be here'. It's a beautiful paddock, the bikes and technology is amazing but I wouldn't come here at all costs. I really enjoy the WorldSBK paddock and riding our bikes. I love working with Kawasaki and right now that's where my opportunity is.



I also think that I'm now too old to come to MotoGP and that I've missed the boat [but then] Herve taking Zarco at 27 had people thinking that maybe he was too old but he's turned into the revelation of the season. For me, looking at my CV, at 30 years old there's a lot going against me. It doesn't make a difference to me if I don't come back here but I do know that I'm lucky to have had two races in 2012 on the Honda when I replaced Casey. It was very difficult for me because I was racing WorldSBK one week and Grand Prix the next but it was enjoyable. I got to ride one of the best bikes and score some points.

The best situation for me would be to stay with Kawasaki and build a future with them. For me though I'm not thinking too far ahead because I'm lucky to have my contract sorted for next year. I'm sure though that in the middle of next year my manager will be having a fun time in the paddock! A lot of the MotoGP grid are open for contracts at the end of next year and it's the same in WorldSBK. All the official teams are open at the end of 2018 so it'll be a fun silly season for everyone!

On the position of both WorldSBK and MotoGP...

I chatted to Shakey Byrne at Laguna about how there should be a promotion/relegation system like in football where if you win a championship you get promoted. Opportunities do present themselves to move up from one paddock to another but if you look at Baz or Laverty they had those opportunities on older bikes that weren't competitive. For Shakey it's the same because he deserves to be in WorldSBK or MotoGP but you have to draw a line about why you'd go there just for the sake of it. He is probably doing better financially by winning in BSB than he would be if he raced somewhere else.

On other elements and whether extra riding – motocross and dirt track – are making riders better and fitter as they get older...

There are a lot more areas where we work to improve our skillsets but I think that, for me, my success came when I became a more balanced person. As I got older I wasn't only being obsessed about the bike; it has meant that I've not been distracted by some things that in the past would've upset me. It's not just training it's also about how electronics have helped protect riders from crashing. There are not as many highsides and motorcycling is now as safe as it's ever been and that's definitely helped to prolong a lot of people's careers. If you talk to Kevin Schwantz he'll tell you about the two-stroke era and how in their 30's riders were so beaten up that they had to stop.

On whether he'd want/need Crew Chief Pere Riba with him for any career change...

Pere is great to work with and wherever I end up in my career I would want him there with me. He's an ex-racer and he understands it. You can see though with Iannone going to Suzuki with his crew chief that it hasn't worked for him. Some people start to point fingers. It shows that bringing people with you has both positives and negatives. For me though it's not just Pere it's the whole group of guys that I have working with me. They are incredible and I know that I'm really lucky to have them.

On the inverted grid system for 2017...

My motocross background comes in very useful in Race 2 when you have to come through the pack. You need to react to other people and what's happening around you. Someone said that it's like riding in deep sand in a motocross race and you have to react to where the ruts develop around the track. For me the key is just getting to the front as quickly as I can. If you get stuck behind someone you can lose a lot of time. My father always taught me in motocross that if you catch a guy then you need to pass him. If you spend too long behind him you'll stick to their speed. Germany was fun because my start wasn't great but the rest of the first lap was. I hope that they make a good study of the regulation and see if it works. For me it's given me an advantage and worked against Chaz sometimes because he hasn't been able to get through. It hasn't really given us extra battles at the front-other than a handful of races like Alex Lowes at the front in Aragon or Jordi Torres in Misano. I think that we shouldn't focus on gimmicks like this but rather on making the other manufacturers more competitive.

On the rest of 2017...

I set myself targets in the winter to win the championship but also a personal goal to beat Chaz at Aragon and Tom in Donington. Obviously Chaz crashed in Aragon which helped me but I was right there in both races. I beat Tom convincingly at Donington but for Laguna Race 2 was probably my favourite race win of the race because I got to the front and set a great pace.



IN THE NUMBERS...

We had a glorious day at Silverstone. There was so very much to enjoy. Andrea Dovizioso rode another magnificent race to take victory, his intelligence winning the day. Maverick Viñales came within a whisker of the spoils, the Movistar Yamaha rider clearly having found his mojo again. Valentino Rossi led for much of the race, and was the favourite to triumph for a long while. Marc Marquez' RC213V engine blew up rather spectacularly, just as he was about to launch his assault on the lead. The top three finished within a second, Cal Crutchlow only having abandoned his charge in the final laps.

In addition to that, we had a tight Moto2 race, and the usual insanity in Moto3, complete with red flag. The sun shone, the vendor and entertainment areas were packed with fun things to do, and all was well with the world. Even Valentino Rossi was impressed: "I think we have to enjoy a little bit this weather condition because is a big surprise. Arrive in Silverstone with the MotoGP with these temperatures, no wind, completely dry is great fun." So why were there 17,000 fewer fans at Silverstone than last year, when the weather was a good deal less appealing?

There are lots of possible explanations. The race was held on a Bank Holiday weekend, so perhaps families decided to head to the countryside or seaside instead of a race. The race was originally to be organized by the Circuit of Wales, but the uncertainty and final collapse of that project when it failed to obtain funding may have persuaded people to change their plans, from fear of the race being cancelled. Perhaps the switch to pay-per-view television is taking its toll, with far fewer people watching the BT Sports broadcast in the UK than had seen the BBC coverage. (The evidence from Spain and Italy contradicts that: spectator numbers there are higher than in previous years, despite similar

precipitate declines in TV audience figures on pay-per-view.) Maybe it was just simple economics: at £90 per adult and £45 for kids under 15, taking a family of four to Silverstone would set you back the best part of £300. And that's before taking travel and accommodation into account. As wages start to decline in the UK, families may be starting to choose their discretionary spending a little more carefully.

While there is merit in all of these theories, and each of these factors may have played a role, there is perhaps a simpler explanation. Crowd numbers are compiled and released by the circuit owners, or the event organisers.



By David Emmett

There is no way of independently verifying the numbers provided by the organizers, as most circuits are operated by private companies, and releasing the numbers is done as a courtesy to Dorna, rather than any legal requirement. Most of the photographers I spoke to – always keen observers of detail – seemed to think that the stands looked as busy in previous years. The paddock felt busy, though some said it was less packed than normal. There was certainly a lot less traffic on the way into the circuit, though that could because the race was scheduled for much later than usual to avoid the clash with F1. The changes to the A43 around Towcester may have helped too.

The question is whether these numbers are even accurate. There could be lots of reasons why the management of a circuit decides to either inflate or downplay quantities. Perhaps the Circuit of Wales had been artificially boosting figures to persuade the Welsh Government to invest in the project. Perhaps Silverstone artificially deflated the numbers to put themselves into a stronger bargaining position with Dorna for next year,

to help them negotiate a lower sanctioning fee. Perhaps the numbers were accurate, and this was just a fluke of circumstance, and next year the crowd numbers will be back around the 70,000 mark.

Whatever the facts at Silverstone, the British Grand Prix is neither unique, nor even particular egregious in the way it handles numbers. The best example is still Jerez, where crowds halved from one year to the next. According to the official figures published by Dorna, in 2015, 243,000 people attended Jerez over the three days of the event, with a crowd of 122,500 on race day. The following year, those numbers had been slashed in half: 120,000 fans turned up over all three days, with just 63,500 on the Sunday. The funny thing is that photographers swore blind there were just as many people at the track the year before, and the traffic on the way into the track felt just as busy as any other year I had been.

Where did the change come from? In 2016, the mayor of Jerez was interviewed on the grid, live on Spanish TV, expressing her pleas-

ure at seeing so many fans at the track, and quoting the much lower crowd numbers. Dorna had no choice but to publish the figures the mayor had mentioned. Whether there were 120,000 fans in Jerez or 60,000 that day, Dorna were constrained by circumstance in the numbers they could publish.

As a result of that incident, and the numbers surrounding a couple of other races, I have learned to treat official attendance numbers with a pinch of salt. We don't know whether the crowd numbers are solely ticket sales to paying customers, or whether team and Dorna guests are included. We don't know whether the numbers are produced as a result of painstaking calculation, educated guesswork, or sheer fantasy for political or tax purposes. What I do know is that the racing at Silverstone was awesome. And if fewer people turned up than last year, then more fool them. Anyone who didn't come missed out. We are in a golden era of MotoGP, so let's enjoy it for as long as we can.









Marc Marquez survived another Silverstone scare on Friday: "I was angry at myself and not only because of the plan but we are fighting for the championship and we need to control the risk. The second crash I can understand because I was pushing and this was normal. For the first one I needed to take care of the cold tyres; maybe I was too confident and didn't consider we were at Silverstone with the cold tyre and it was sunny but not hot like in other races."

Cal Crutchlow had the misfortune to catch a glimpse of the hefty 'off'. "If that was anyone else he'd have two broken legs and a dislocated shoulder! I have no idea how he gets away with them. And to top it off in the next crash the bike nearly hit him and he still misses it; someone else would be cleaned up. It shows credit to how fast and how tough

it is to get back up and still go fast immediately. He is riding well and in one of the best parts of his career. His crash was massive. I was going into Turn 2 and I looked up and thought 'what the f***k's that?!" and in the distance it was him flying through the air. It was big...but I'm glad he's OK."



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ANOTHER TWIST FOR MARQUEZ

There was moment on Sunday afternoon, just as Marc Marquez had befallen the most unlikely of fates, pulling off track at the end of Silverstone's Hangar Straight that a very hushed cheer emanated from the pressroom. Not because this was some form of schadenfreude derived from the young Catalan's expense, you understand – far from it. Rather, Honda's first MotoGP engine expiring in racing trim in a little under ten years had sent this pulsating and, frankly, odd championship veering off and down another of those unexpected, unpredictable ravines.

The Honda's unfortunate demise brought eventual winner Andrea Dovizioso, Maverick Viñales and Valentino Rossi back into serious contention, even if the latter insisted his deficit of 24 points is simply too much to overhaul. It's true that Dovizioso is finding ways to make Ducati's GP17 competitive at previously unfruitful tracks; the Italian's management of a weekend to ensure he's in as good a shape as possible when the race enters into its final third, one of the standout weapons in his impressive, burgeoning armoury.

And Yamaha can take great comfort from gains made at a recent one-day test at Misano, where, if recent rumour is to be believed,

Viñales and Rossi were so impressed by Yamaha's 2018 chassis, they had it fitted to race in England. The issues concerning rear tyre degradation, of which Viñales had complained in Austria, certainly weren't evident in those final five laps as he whittled away at Dovizioso's lead, making the soft rear last until the very end.

It's hard to escape the feeling that the small cheer stemmed partly from the expectation that Marquez was only going to consolidate his championship lead further in the closing laps.

Had the motor of his RC213V not gone pop at well over 200mph, it's hard to imagine the Honda man finishing anywhere other than the podium. Would it be overly pessimistic to suggest his third DNF of the season has simply delayed the apparently inevitable march to a fourth world title?

Everything over the weekend – and, indeed, the past month – had suggested that Marquez is reaching the level of confidence experienced throughout 2014, his most successful year to date. And this time around he has an added two seasons of experience, during which the 24-year old has learnt when to bide his time and when to attack.



By Neil Morrison

His performance on Sunday until his untimely demise had suggested he was simply waiting the right moment to strike. "I felt great on the bike," he confirmed shortly after. "I was trying to manage the times in the race and waiting for the final laps."

There have many moments over the past month to ponder whether Marquez is, indeed, coming into the strongest form of his career. And if not that, then he is, at the very least, approaching it. Any doubts on the merits of his Brno masterstroke were duly dispelled by a remarkable weekend in Austria, where he was pushing Dovizioso and Ducati at a track where he had no right to be doing so. Afterwards he had spoke of recently finding the "sweet feeling" aboard the RC213V. Following a pre-season and opening six races where he did not feel at optimum level, it was all coming together. And so it continued at Silverstone.

On Friday afternoon, the Spaniard was flicked off at speed through the 130mph Maggotts-

Becketts complex due to not sufficiently heating his rear tyre before pushing. Knocked around and in some discomfort, Marquez made his way back to the garage. And then set about righting his previous wrong. "My second bike was with a totally different set-up and they were not able to change because it takes a lot of time," he said on Friday. "So my confidence was not good." Yet he was immediately up to speed, setting a series of laps with ever-increasing speed until he was fastest. The showing caught Cal Crutchlow's eye. "If that was anyone else he'd have two broken legs and a dislocated shoulder," he joked. "It shows credit to how fast and how tough it is to get back up and still go fast immediately." Dovizioso was also full of praise for Marquez's approach.

"Marc is a rider who it's difficult for him to not play with the limit, it's normal for him. He has to do that every time." It seems the more he plays with it, the more he knows where it lies.

And anyone that doubts the level of thought Marquez puts into his racing, need only read Jonas Folger's observations on his riding during the German Grand Prix. "The best thing I saw was when he started to change his riding style, because I was always waiting until my tyre dropped then changing my style," said Folger. "He is doing this before. He knows already that, in two laps, my tyre will drop so he already starts to pick up the bike early to make the tyre's life even longer. There were four different stages. You can see always one step, another step... He's not just pushing until five laps to go and then changing. He's already starting on lap six."

Not in the four-stroke MotoGP era has a rider rode to championship victory while having three 'X's next to his name on the title scorecard. But Marquez has shown enough in August to suggest his most recent outing at the end of the English summer is no more than a blip. There could be a different cheer altogether come Valencia.



MotoGP GBR



LOLLIPOP, LOLLIPOP

MotoGP riders rehearsed a new flag-to-flag procedure that involved gated entry from pitlane with an angled trajectory to the box and the second bike under charge of a mechanic with a ‘lollipop’ stick similar to F1 pitstops in an effort to improved safety in the wake of the Espargaro/Iannone incident several weeks previously. The trial predictably split opinion when mooted and scheduled for assessment in the Safety Commission and then after the act itself.

“For me it was not different to the style I was using because the angle of the bike is much closer,” said Pedrosa. “For me what is not good is the little stickers on the floor because it is very difficult to see which one is yours and difficult to remember if you go after or before. You have to be looking at the floor when you should be looking at your mechanic. You need to look down and then quickly up and find your mechanic. In this scenario Marc and I go in the same gate and the colours are the same. It is a little bit confusing.”

“A waste of time,” decreed Crutchlow. “Like I said before: if you crash in the pitlane on a flag-to-flag race the as far as I’m concerned then it’s your own fault. When Iannone crashed it was not because of Aleix; you just have to open your eyes. All this stuff - changing the guys and the angles – works perfectly here but when you come to a pitlane like Phillip Island people will be cleaned out in the garages. We don’t have much steering lock I can tell you that.”

The role of the mechanic thus grows. Before helmeted-staff merely had to brace the motorcycle but their judgement could now affect races at a crucial time. Parts of the lollipop trial in Silverstone looked rather half-hearted and slightly ridiculous but there is little doubting the importance of the extra responsibility. “I agree to use that [the system] because firstly, the riders can’t see well like the lollipop man,” said Dovizioso. “Secondly in that moment the riders are not thinking a lot! Some can be crazy...I think it’s good to have the lollipop, like with the cars.”

“That guy has a clear vision and I think it’s much better, safer and you don’t lose so much.”

“There is a lot on for the lollipop guy,” says Scott Redding. “Is he too patient and waits, costing you three positions in the race, or does he take the risk and go? That’s a bit of a problem. If you come in and you’re top three in the race, and the mechanic is too late, it could be difficult.”

In the end the safety aspect could be negated if the riders cannot stop properly while heading towards the pitbox. “The only negative point I believe is that bike is going to the box, so if you have some problem, or you brake too late, or you lose the front, it’s not the best,” Dovizioso concluded.

More processes for the teams means more practice and the first real judgement will happen when the rain next falls.

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"I am in love with progression: I'm obsessed by it"

Words by Adam Wheeler, Photos by MCH Photo/Monster Energy

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JORGE LORENZO

AT THIRTY YEARS OF AGE THE FIFTH MOST SUCCESSFUL RIDER OF ALL-TIME IN MOTOGP SEEMS TO HAVE LOST NONE OF HIS INTENSITY. JORGE LORENZO WAS THE TALK OF THE SERIES WITH HIS HIGH-PROFILE (AND FRANKLY BALLSY) MOVE OUT OF A SHARPLY COMPETITIVE ENVIRONMENT AT YAMAHA TO TRY AND CONVERT A FAST AND WELL-RESOURCED ITALIAN FACTORY TEAM INTO WORLD CHAMPS FOR JUST THE SECOND TIME SINCE THEIR 'RETURN' TO PREMIER CLASS GRAND PRIX COMPETITION IN 2003. HE'S GETTING CLOSER.

A first podium for the 2015 world champ came at Jerez in the month of May and the adjustment period of pushing European as opposed to Japanese prototype machinery to the very edge is still very much in flux. The task of betterment and 'making gains' has seen Lorenzo smiling more frequently in the GP paddock, even if the podium regularity that became such a staple and weekly part of his life has ebbed away (for the moment).

Sitting down to talk about a life-changing 'job' and the scale of his personal objective, it's easy to feel Lorenzo's vigour. He is famous, rich and lauded, but has a reenergised demeanour. He could almost be rubbing his hands together in spite of the tougher times getting the Ducati to work to his pinpoint and rapier cornering style. #99 is renowned for his concentration and drive for perfectionism and now he is pounding at a new rock in search of some personal sporting gold. We wanted to ask where the continued desire to strive came from and where a life of fifteen years at the peak of a risky and acute sport could go next...

You made a change of team, colour, motivation but has life also changed?

The fire inside of me changed. I have more motivation to achieve my best every day: to wake up and push to my limit and train a lot and to continue to be motivated. I think if anyone stays ten years in one 'job' – in my case Yamaha – surrounded by the same people, same ambience and the same bike you lose that fire, little-by-little, because of the routine. I needed something different. To be with another bike - because that is one of the most important things - and to be in a project where I would be an important 'piece' to make it stronger. To make the best bike on the grid motivates me a lot and I think we can achieve that, to make the most 'complete' bike because at the moment we just have the most powerful! I want to work with Gigi [Dall'inga] and the engineers to try and make this possible. I want to be one of the few riders to win with two bikes and the only other one with Ducati apart from Casey [Stoner].



Did you really find that new motivation straight away when you left Yamaha? I don't mean at the test but maybe visiting the Ducati factory, interacting with fans and thinking ahead...

Yeah because we are human and we get used to the same things and routine very easily. It is very difficult to keep the same motivation every year when you are always doing the same. The last year cannot be like the first. Even if I am very professional and keep motivated and work a lot you still lose something and with this new project, presentation and new way of working you feel a bit more alive...and this is important in life. To feel refreshed.

Many people don't change jobs too much. At an elite sporting level what is it like to get out of bed each day and step a little into the unknown?

I would compare it to having a relationship. When you are with a girl for a lot of years then you understand her and have a lot of affection and normally you want this person a lot. But in another aspect you lose a little bit of the passion you have in the first weeks or months. It depends; because I don't want to generalise and there are many kinds of relationships but sometimes a new person or a change can be positive. You then need to understand again, act different.



I had the option to stay with my old team with a very good offer, good treatment and with probably the most complete bike on the grid but I think it is just part of being human that you want a change and something inside of me said I needed new stimulus: to be more alive and be the best of me.

Looking at your social media channels reveals you are a busy guy: Andorra, Switzerland, training, sponsors. It seems like not too much has changed for you and you are quite nomadic...

You have to understand what is your ideal life and then don't forget the people that worse off than you. We're very lucky and I try not to forget that. I am one of 20% in the top level of sport and one of those that is very lucky: it is important to be conscious of that and it can be difficult because the routine can make you think negatively and that I travel too much, for example. I cannot complain.

It must still be hard to constantly be on the move...

Yeah, but who pays for all of that? All the houses and cars? If you are not doing the right things to be fast and win races, championships and go to events then it won't happen. The lifestyle is a circle and you have to make a decision: do you stay in or out? If you stay then you have to be grateful for the chance and do it in the best way that you can.

What about performance? For many athletes there is only a small window at the top. Unless you are a footballer like Messi, Xavi or Iniesta at Barcelona [Lorenzo is an avid Barça fan]. Is your move a bit like a Barça to Madrid transfer?

Hmmm, maybe more like to a PSG or Manchester City: the ones who still haven't won that many titles or Champions Leagues!



PSG are trying, City also, but only [winning] in their respective leagues. Ducati is also trying and are close to a world title but still haven't achieved what they want and that is our goal, no?

How will it be for you not to be able to perform or reach your maximum while you acclimatise?

Well, you can always do more. You cannot put limits. If you only complain about the bike, and make excuses then you don't improve. You have to draw-out your best in all circumstances and the conditions on the track and focus only on that while not forgetting to explain to the engineers the best areas in which they can improve the bike. I'm still quite far from my maximum with the bike that Ducati have...but I don't stop working. It is a working process.

Is that process frustrating or exciting?

When you achieve something difficult then the flavour is different. It is happiness, and the harder the challenge the better the feeling when you get it. That's why winning a world title with another brand will be amazing. And with Ducati it will feel important and special and proud. I'm in love with progression. I'm obsessed with it. It is progression that finally makes you win because if you stop doing that then you are beaten [because] the others will not stop. In this world you cannot stop progressing...and I like that. When we improve some piece of the bike then I am happy because it means more results. When I improve my technique on the bike then I am happy because I know it will lead to good things.

But chasing ‘progress’ is a bit of an animal. It’s a commitment that seems to be very consuming, maybe you-

Don’t enjoy [life]! I think it is another kind of enjoyment: one of tension, of competition and working with a team. It is a hard world and requires a lot of concentration, certainly not being on a beach in the Maldives or in the cinema or playing PlayStation with your friends where you can ‘turn off’. I think it is something that people who stay at a certain level [of sport] can enjoy. I think normal people can suffer in this situation but elite sportsmen seem to enjoy the struggle. It is something strange!

It does seem like a strange life...

As I told you I am very lucky: to keep being here and to keep competing is a personal decision. I could easily stay at home and retire at thirty and live with the achievements I have made. This is something that many people cannot do... so we must appreciate this and that we also have a very popular sport and interested factories and they give so many benefits and importance to the riders. If there were none of this – no television, newspapers, magazines, and so many fans – then life would not be like this. It can be difficult to achieve something great. If you are motivated you can achieve up to a certain level in your life, job or sport. To really be No.1 then you need to be obsessed. You must work hard. In soccer if you want to reach the top, like millions of other people, then just being motivated is not enough. You have to be obsessed to be the best, and do much more than all the players. With motorcycling – OK, much less people participate – but there are still a lot of fast riders in the world.

Tell me about being famous and have you seen a different reaction in Italy especially?

I think in the eyes of some people I have gained a bit more respect. I went from a very comfortable situation to a more difficult challenge. I feel that most of the ‘Ducatisti’ now support me a little bit more – maybe not everyone, and that is normal – but in general I feel there is a bit more respect. I think jumping out of my comfort zone is something that not that many people would be willing to do.

There was so much attention at the first test with Ducati in Spain at the end of last year and also that first race at Qatar. You’ve been in the spotlight for many years so what was all that extra fuss like?

There was a lot of curiosity to see what I was capable of with the bike. I heard some voices saying ‘Lorenzo is going to win from the beginning’ and ‘he’ll destroy them’ and some others saying ‘it will be a disaster’. Neither one nor the other. I think it will be quite a long process. Sometimes we will be competitive and sometimes we will struggle.

How about handling the public?

Sometimes you have to contain yourself. Some people can be a little less respectful but everyone has a different education and way to interact with the world. It is the only time that a fan or someone will see you – this is the theory – so it is difficult because your nature is to respond in the same way you are being contacted. You have to go through the process of being conscious of this [the way to act]. In Spain I’m lucky because motorsport is popular there.

O FEATURE

Sometimes it is difficult because you might be eating with your friends and someone wants to take a picture and you have to stop, stand and play the role. It is important for that person that they see you in a positive way.

Do you have to be the actor?

An actor no...but you have to act a little bit unnaturally. Like I said, it is only a few moments and for most of the time we lead splendid lives. We cannot complain. We have to accept these moments and live with them in the best way possible.

Is the fame game still something quite nice for you?

I always try to enjoy it is because life is very short and even in situations where you think 'I'm not going to like this or learn anything from this' you have to find strategies to get something from it. When the cameras are on you then you can be a bit tenser...but you have to try and enjoy it because it gets transmitted to the TV.

Do you think the press and people will see the new passion and motivation you have this year then?

Yeah, I think it is difficult to express something that you are not 'living'. Small gestures are difficult to cover. There might be minutes, hours or days that you are upset about something but if you are happy in general I think it is difficult to hide that, your state of being.

Do you have a nice story about fame helping to meet someone?

Haha [thinks] I was quite impressed when I met Brad Pitt in Silverstone [2015], a big guy! And I'm not afraid to say when a guy is good-looking!

When you meet people you normally see on TV then [your impression] changes depending on how they are in real life. There are some people that seem to change a lot and it can be a shock.

Speaking of famous people I hear you apparently have most of Michael Schumacher's racing suits and some of his stuff in your World Champions 99 museum [<http://worldchampions99.com/>] collection in Andorra: he is another athlete famed for his focus and dedication...
There is only one suit in World Champions but it stands out from the others because he is the driver with more titles – seven – and because I have the complete outfit with the boots and the gloves. I don't have any other complete sets yet...but, yes, I have almost one from all seventeen years that Michael was in F1; I'm just missing one from 2002 but I am trying [to obtain one]. But, yeah, I liked Michael even though when I was a ten year old I was a fan of Hakkinen because everyone followed Schumacher! I went the other way!

Why the other way?

I don't know! My father was a Real Madrid fan and I went with Barcelona, just to take another team. Little by little I started to take more notice of Michael and Ayrton Senna through videos and I liked their perfectionist way. In the case of Michael he was a very hard worker and always tried to control what he could control. It was good stimulation for me some times...and it is a great pity what happened with his accident a few years ago.



The Champions gallery is only a fraction of what you have collected?

Yes, around 20-30%, but we have little space so we cannot put everything. At the moment Andorra is getting better and well known. We are getting on top of it [as a business] and when that works we can create other places. I think it [a franchise] is a good idea because it was a new idea and something that was not on the market: a place where motorsport lovers can meet, chat, eat, play simulators, buy merchandise and see historical articles of these two motorsports and watch the races. I think it was something new and different. I also have the sun-glasses company – Skull Rider – which is growing a lot now. I am also a little collector of sport cars; this is a passion. So these three big passions and projects at the moment – apart from the racing – is what take more of my time.

You never know which new passion might enter your life but at the moment it is these three.

World Champions 99 seemed like the first big sign of preparing for something – a business enterprise – after racing...

Yeah, instead of money, you have to have goals. If you just wake up and have nothing to do – sit on the sofa and watch TV – then there is nothing in your life. You have to have these projects, and to work hard and find success is very important in life. If you have nothing to do then life doesn't make much sense.



FEATURE

Are you still looking for new collection pieces?

A little bit less than before-

Where are you looking?

It depends. 20-30% of the pieces I swap with other riders or drivers, and others I buy from collectors. With [Sebastian] Vettel I started swapping in 2012 and eventually got all four of the title years. With Schumacher I started with one suit and finally have all seventeen. It is a little bit like a drug: if you don't eventually stop then you will never finish! I've stopped a little bit but if I find a special piece then I go for it.

Anything left to find?

I still have a few drivers and riders missing, like Phil Read. In Formula One; Jackie Stewart and Fangio and some of the earlier champions. It is a never-ending passion.

Maybe it is a question for further down the line but when you see Sete Gibernau [former MotoGP race winner] coming back into the paddock to help Dani Pedrosa, is that something you could ever see yourself doing when you stop?

You never know. Maybe I try it once and I enjoy it: living the MotoGP life in another capacity with much less tension and pressure. Maybe it is nice and also to take profit of the countries where you visit. This would be nice. For the moment I don't think I will choose this way of life when I retire...I would keep the projects I have now. But you never know. We change very fast. The life of a rider goes very quickly: you are always looking at the next race.

Thirty years old this year-

Yes, thank you for that!

It seems crazy to think ten years ago you were the hot rookie coming into MotoGP. Someone like Maverick Viñales is 22.

Do you feel like one of the older establishment now?

Yes...to start in the championship at 15 – well, 14 and I had to wait until Saturday practice at Jerez and my 15th birthday to really begin – a long time ago. I remember reading an interview in a Spanish magazine, Motociclismo, with Marco Melandri [Ex-GP winner now in Superbike] and the question was about his age and how he is still young and he answered something like 'I used to be young...but now there are kids like Jorge Lorenzo coming in'. And I have the same sensation now. I am not old but there are kids in Moto3 that are only sixteen and I'm already thirty. This is life and every person goes through the same.

Do you feel the same?

Physically I still have this baby-face! Maybe a bit less because a few grey hairs are coming. The body changes. At twenty you can party with your friends and the next day you are like a flower. Now you need two days to recover from the same party! It's different. But then you are also different. At twenty you are more impatient and understand much less about life and racing. With more years you know now when you have to push and when you have to make the right moves to prevent crashes and injury. In general it is more positive to be thirty rather than twenty.

Here and now in 2017 what is happiness for you? It cannot be victories as you already have so many...

I feel like I am in the best moment of my life, in all aspects. I have my health – the most important thing – my family is good, I enjoy life with my friends, I have achieved all what I dreamt of – much more – and I'm in a very nice challenge. I have a lot of passions apart from bikes. What more can I ask?

JORGE LORENZO





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KTM's new Powerwear catalogue is now ready for a browse and the company have taken a more focussed approach. Gone are the bizarre trinkets and weirdness (KTM cuckoo clocks and toasters? Even if some of the designs are still amusing and pretty cool...have a look at the gum boots) and the casualwear and sport wear is more orderly and geared towards general motorcyclists, customers, race fans and hardcore KTM followers.

An interesting new addition is the **Emphasis** Collection. KTM are actually offering performance sportswear now for a pre-ride/race workout and have expanded beyond high-quality protective and safety goods only for motorcycling. The casualwear has a particular look but the Emphasis is black, simple and comes in jackets, hoodies, t-shirts, hats, shorts and trousers (even a towel). We're hoping to get our hands on some for a proper 'road test' but with the fitness apparel market apparently in full bloom (prices of Nike and Adidas 'technical' wear verge on the ridiculous) then KTM have ventured into a curious new marketplace with PW, especially considering the amount of off-road motorcyclists alone that are pretty active. We'll highlight a few other pieces from the 2018 booklet in the coming weeks.

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By Steve Matthes
Photos by Simon Cudby/Rich Shepherd

**IRONMAN GOES
DUTCH' WITH TOMAC**



The ideal end to a dream season for double champion Zach Osborne. A Matterley Basin Nations spot is the final slice of cream on the 2017 cake

MOTOCROSS IRONMAN



Blake Baggett was ultimately hampered in his 450MX push in 2017 but it was still a breakthrough year for the former Pro Circuit athlete



Typical style from Marvin Musquin
who will be another rider content
with his progress in 2017



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AT LAST ET..

Eli Tomac finished the motocross season in a way he couldn't in supercross. What a topsy-turvy campaign the Monster Energy Kawasaki rider has waded through. Beginning in 450SX where he fought hard to make up a huge points deficit then promptly gave it all back and lost the title to Ryan Dungey, this 450MX season started with a couple of dominating rides that made all of us feel like he was going to ride away with this title rather easily with Dungey pulling a surprise retirement.

But, yeah, funny things happened on the way to that 'easy' title...a mechanical, some bad starts, crashes and before you knew it, his lead was down to less than a moto with three to go. Tomac prevented more questions from mounting with a great second moto ride at Budds Creek two weeks ago but this past weekend in Indiana he crashed pretty hard going after Euro 'invader' Jeffrey Herlings and one had to wonder how difficult he was going to make this on himself.

"Yeah, the ego got in the way there," Tomac told me about going after Herlings in the first moto. "The thing was I could see him making some mistakes and I wasn't riding out of my comfort zone at all so I figured why not?"

Well, 'why not' is risky and Tomac hit some loose dirt and bent his clutch perch down far enough so that it wouldn't come back up. Clutchless, Tomac proved clutch (see what I did there?) in working up from that crash to fifth place. With Herlings' win, it meant that all Tomac had to do was score one point in moto two IF Marvin Musquin, of the Red Bull KTM team, won to secure his first 450 title.

Away from the start Tomac and Herlings (who started beside each other in both motos) locked elbows and neither one got off the launch they wanted but at least Tomac was just outside the top ten, Herlings, was way-back before crashing. Tomac played it safe the entire

second moto with his ego "in his back pocket" as he said and rode safe and steady to work his way up. Not even a mid-moto pass by Herlings, complete with a look over and tear off pull by the Dutchman, could goad him into leaving his safe zone.

Preferring to leave the battle for this weekend's USGP in Florida, Tomac did enough in Indiana to bring a title to the green team, it's first since Ryan Villopoto retired. An indication of just what a crazy up-and-down outdoor term it was provided by the fact that Tomac's 470 point win total was the lowest in the modern era of just 250's/450's. Chad Reed's 2009 450MX title of 483 is next highest. Pretty remarkable and shows you the inconsistencies not only from Tomac but

By Steve Matthes



from Musquin who was injured for a race or two and RM ATV/MC KTM's Blake Baggett who hurt his thumb at the halfway point and was never the same rider.

With his near miss in 450SX and now this 450MX title in hand, and with Honda's Ken Roczen a total question mark in terms of whether he can get back to his old level, it's Tomac that sits atop American SX/MX as the best rider. But unlike the times that names like Dungey, Villopoto, Stewart and Carmichael could claim the same status, Tomac's hold on the mountaintop seems tenuous.

He's got everything you would want in a 'king' but whether it's the crashes, the bad starts or whatever, he just can't seem to stamp it right when he's on the verge of going that way. Whether or not finally closing the deal this motocross season gives him the confidence needed to really assert himself remains to be seen.

One theory that I have is that maybe after year-after-year of a dominant rider, we're entering into an era like the early 90's where parity ruled before some guy named Jeremy McGrath came along. But then again, you watch him in some indoor and outdoor races and you're like: "Ah yeah, this dude is SO good."

I do feel bad for the Eli Tomac fan this season as he or she was probably driven into psychiatric therapy or at least some heart medicine as they tracked Tomac's various highs and lows. Why can't he get a start? Why does he take so long to get onto his bike after a crash? How does he dominate one week and then look so mortal the next? And why does he have these weird issues with brakes on his Kawasaki KX450F? Every single time you thought that it was time to print the title t-shirts, something weird happened.

Although it's taken a little while longer due to injuries and crashes, he's got the one that some champs say is the hardest to bag. We've seen time and time again how important confidence is in this sport and perhaps this will mark the start of the Eli Tomac era where he starts racking up wins and titles. As opposed to those other names listed above where it was pretty much a 'sure thing', I'll have to reserve judgment on the #3 but in one year's time I also retain the right to say 'told you so'.



KTM ACE 730

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FEATURE

SHAPING THE NEW GENERATION

A TALK WITH JACKY VIMOND AND ALBERTO
PUIG ON SPOTTING AND NURTURING TALENT
FOR THE TOP OF MXGP AND MotoGP

By Adam Wheeler

Photos by Ray Archer (Vimond), www.motogp.com

www.britishtalentteam.com (Puig)





FEATURE

The mind of an exceptional motorsport athlete must be a curious place and there are fewer people more qualified and close to tapping into the complexities of a person seeking elite performance on a regular basis than the previous generations. A sad fact for any individual approaching middle age is that wisdom and experience is very rarely matched with the same physical sharpness. The ‘been there and done it’ mantra is so true...but often too late to put into practical use.

The heavy presence of ex-professionals within sport and their respective discipline is an indicator of an enthusiasm and fascination that does not wilt. The need to impart knowledge and assist the next flow of talent – perhaps better or with more potential than the mentor or ex-Pro ever had – is an innate desire. The type of unshakable belief that they can affect careers is delivered with the same zest with which they chased their own goals.

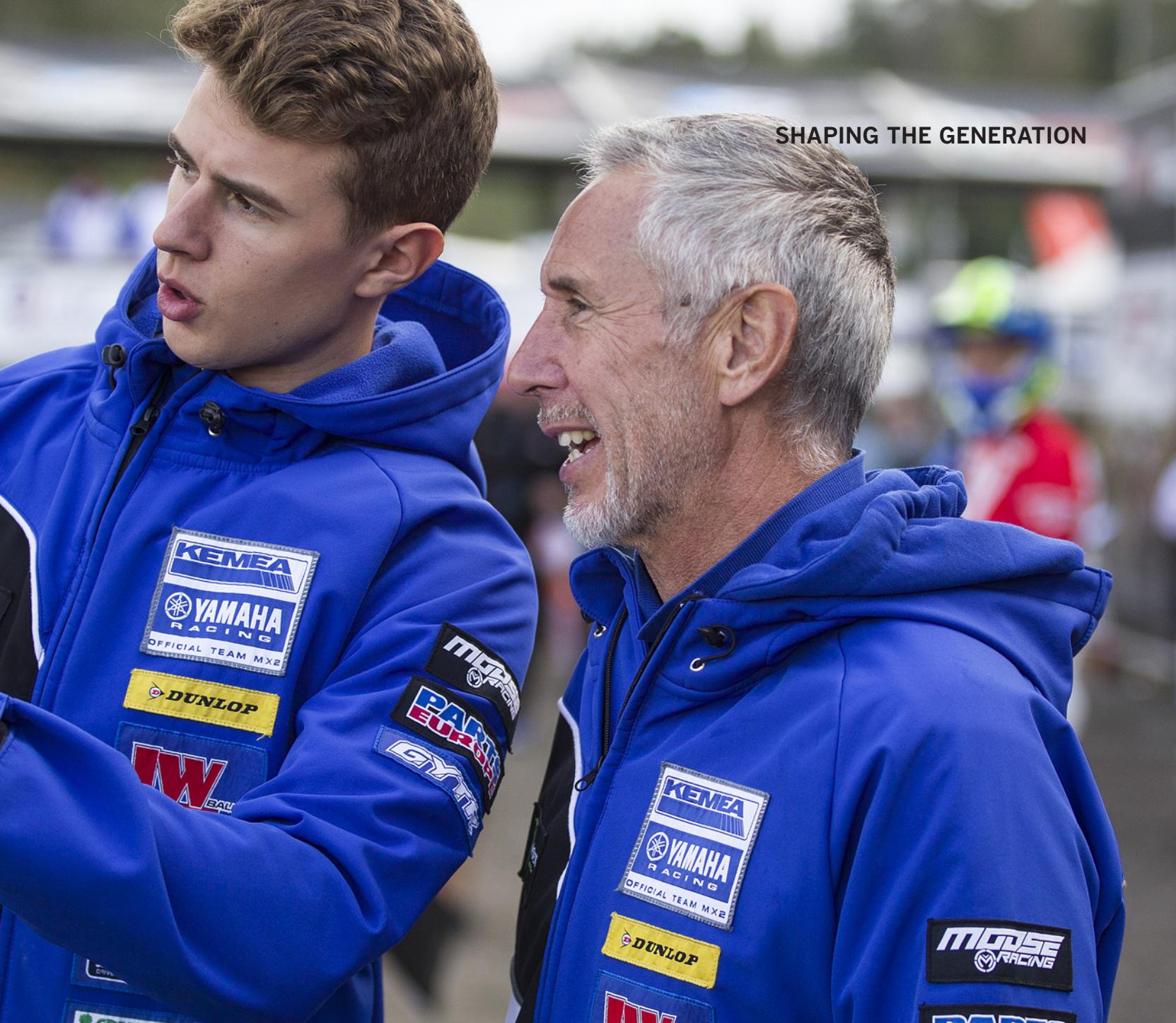
“You have to do this fully,” says Alberto Puig, ‘unearther’ of Grand Prix World Champions like Dani Pedrosa, Toni Elias and Casey Stoner and now in charge of the British Talent Cup among other projects for Dorna and HRC.

VIMOND: “YOU KNOW LIFE AND SPORT ARE SO CLOSE AND YOU HAVE TO PAY ATTENTION TO BOTH AND HELP WITH Maturity. I HAVE SEEN THAT IF A GUY IS NOT MATURE THEN HE WILL NOT BE THE BEST HE CAN BE ON THE BIKE AND HE WON’T BE WORLD CHAMPION.”

“You have to give all you have to that rider, that situation, that race and that preparation of the team. If you do it and it’s not your life then you won’t get the result.”



For a person like 56 year old Jacky Vimond – head of rider development at Kemeia Yamaha and the manufacturer’s official team in MX2 and thus a supply



SHAPING THE GENERATION

route to the premier class - that means schooling and working with three athletes through nineteen Grand Prix, training and riding sessions and the vital pre-season base training period. Like the sport of motocross itself, the role is all encompassing purely due to the amount of bike hours and competitive outings.

To speak with both Jacky and 50 year old Alberto is like downing an espresso of verve for their activities and expertise. In the short time we spend with both it

feels like we are only able to scratch the surface of what they believe, how they apply that to their methods and ultimately what creates and makes a sporting star. For a first toe-dip into the subject their opinions are typical of the behind-the-scenes insight that many fans or students of a sport like to hear...

Ever humble Jacky Vimond is surprised we want to speak but also happy to avoid the Lommel rain at the Grand Prix of Belgium and we duck into the Kemea awning.

FEATURE

In between sips of water and blasts of a YZ250F being warmed after an engine change the Frenchman talks entertainingly about a post-racing career where a 1986 250cc world championship was followed by tutorage of Sébastien Tortelli to two world titles and assistance to riders such as Josh Coppins, Gautier Paulin and more. He now helps Alvin Ostlund, Brent Van Doninck and Benoit Paturel in Yamaha blue and for what has been a tough season for the Belgian team; Paturel only just making the breakthrough to be Grand Prix winner in Switzerland.

"It's impossible to talk about coaching without first speaking about mentality," he says. "You could do an activity that will give a rider 10% extra and then takes away 10% from another. If we go cycling 60-80km then a rider will be happy with the work he has done but another will think it was s**t and will feel tired. To coach somebody you really need to know them. You then need to make a strategy to help a guy get stronger and it always has to be with his mind before his body. If the mind is first then the body will follow. You cannot be a coach if you don't think about the mentality."

You must need time to get to know an athlete to make that happen...

Yes, it is not always easy and there is also the language and trying to understand and find the best words to explain things well. There is also the age to consider. Fifteen to twenty years is an important time but when you get to twenty a rider will know what he wants and knows the way to get there. The short way will never be the best one but everyone still looks for it. When they are fifteen then you need to find the way and you need a push.



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When they are twenty then you shouldn't have to push. You need to explain your work and your motives in order to reach a new place or performance. You also have to explain to riders when they think they are young that time actually passes very quickly.

Generally do riders listen or does it depend on the personality?

You have examples like Sébastien Tortelli that were a bit scary; I had to make sure what I was saying was right for him because he was so focussed and said 'I trust you, if you tell me to do that then I will. If you tell me I can jump there then I will'. It was hard for me because I always had to be sure it was correct for him. It is important to know what your riders can do and what is possible and their level. For instance in training this week there was something on track that Benoit could do but Alvin couldn't and it was also scary. I said to Alvin that it wasn't the right time – yes, Benoit could – but Alvin couldn't and I said don't take the risk because motocross is dangerous enough.

Did you have to educate yourself? You had experience as a racer but dealing and school-ing other athletes must be something else to learn...

I went to school! After I finished on the bike the French federation asked me to be the national trainer so I went back to school at 29 years old and it was really interesting. I needed to improve my [academic] level if I am honest but by being World Champion then there was one side of that role where I had a shortcut. I was still in a class with nineteen and twenty year olds and it was hard to concentrate! Sometimes I was more tired than at a GP. I learned a lot - psychology and physiology - and I made mistakes and learned from them: just as a did as a rider because there were no coaches when I was racing.



FEATURE

Was there a time when you got it really right? A moment when the correct call at an ideal time worked out well?

Many times. Even words and judgement to give confidence. Like a place on the start, you can say: "take this slot because even if you miss the start then you can slide inside and be in the top five." And it has turned out to be the case. Even this week in training Benoit didn't trust me that he could make a jump and I said "your line is wrong, you can make this double, you have to go that way" and twice he thanked me for advice with his lines. He did the double and felt happy for the rest of the training session. It was satisfying to collaborate like that. It makes me happy to see Brian Moreau [125ss European Champion] do well because I spent three years with him and the same for Gautier Paulin. Benoit is the latest but of course Sebastian was two times world champion. I have to say though that Brent and the difference in the way he is riding over last year is really good; there is more fire. You don't need to see riders win to have satisfaction and know you have done a good job, just that they improve and grow-up.

Tortelli, Paulin, Coppins were all at a high level so that must be a different challenge compared to someone like Brian or Alvin who are striving to come up?

It is the same thing but on different levels: it's about finding the best thing to help the guys get better. For the young kids it is also about the lifestyle and if things are OK away from the track then you find their performance is closely related. With someone like Josh [Coppins] it was looking and finding the small things on the track to help him with that extra few percent.

For example, we worked on his front braking into corners and he said it was one of the best things he'd been taught and that was great to hear. You know life and sport are so close and you have to pay attention to both and help with maturity. I have seen that if a guy is not mature then he will not be the best he can be on the bike and he won't be world champion. Not everybody can be world champion but some have the potential and you have to help them get to the maximum. If your place is 2nd, 3rd or 4th and you have done everything to make your place then you'll be happy and without regrets but if you sleep-in, take shortcuts, don't make your training goals then you won't be happy because you'll always think 's**t, what if I had really tried?'

For riders on 250s and in MX2 there is even more of a rush because they need to figure everything out before they are 23...

Yes, it is like this now but a consequence is that I see a lot of the guys at 20-21 are really smart: much more than I was, but then I was also more mature. It is really strange. The style of life today means there is more assistance, more help, more people doing things. Even as a coach I try to encourage more autonomy. If I am too much on top and they are just waiting for information then they won't be thinking to themselves 'what can I do to be better?'

What's more difficult: picking a rider up after injury or who is low on confidence or one that is dealing with a lot of pressure and isn't performing?

I think pressure. The story with Benoit is strange.



Like many guys he really wanted to be world champion and he worked hard for that and was focussed for that but the others were pushing and his results weren't coming. He said "s**t, I need to be world champion, I need this for me" and I had to say to him: "but have you won a GP? Have you won a moto? Please, first we have to go to each GP and try to win...and then we can think about being world champion" and he stopped and reflected on that and changed immediately and then started to come back stronger and was at the level like he was at Qatar. One word, one sentence can slightly change a story.

What about Brent because that's a different story where the results haven't really been there...

Yes, it is a bit more complicated. The problem with Brent is in accepting some issues and he feels a lot of the time he is unlucky, and this is wrong.

When you are unlucky then what can you do? He'll say it wasn't his fault and he had no luck, when you have to look at yourself and say 'what mistakes did I make? How can I do it better next time?' You have to accept things. He is fast though so it is something we have to work on. He needs to make small changes and accept that one day Benoit might be faster than him and fix that the next time.

Is it difficult to work with three riders at three different levels and points in their career?

It is interesting and enriches the job. You have to think all the time about all three and not only coach but also create the right atmosphere, to be the ring leader and make sure that all these three riders are happy to be together and work together to make everyone stronger.



Sometimes you have the situation where Benoit is working in France and Alvin was in Sweden and I was alone with Brent and he said "it feels strange to be alone and it is better to be together!" If you had asked any of them at the start of the year then they would have all preferred to be doing their own programme. That was the problem with Benoit. He worked as part of a duo in 2016 and couldn't believe he would have to share me with yet another rider this year and I had to explain it would be good for him.

Still, it must be tricky to animate, motivate and comfort different riders at different times...

Yes but we have a good atmosphere together and we are stronger together if everybody does a good job and to their maximum. If the group is strong then everyone will be.

19 GPs, the Nations, French championship races: what keeps you going? Where is the juice?

To see that I can help the guys to get better. This is the most satisfying. Benoit was a real kid before and now he is way-better. He is a 'man', and sometimes he still impresses me with what he can do on the track because he wasn't talented. With Brent and Alvin it makes me happy to see them improve.

SHAPING THE GENERATION

As you a better coach than you were a rider?

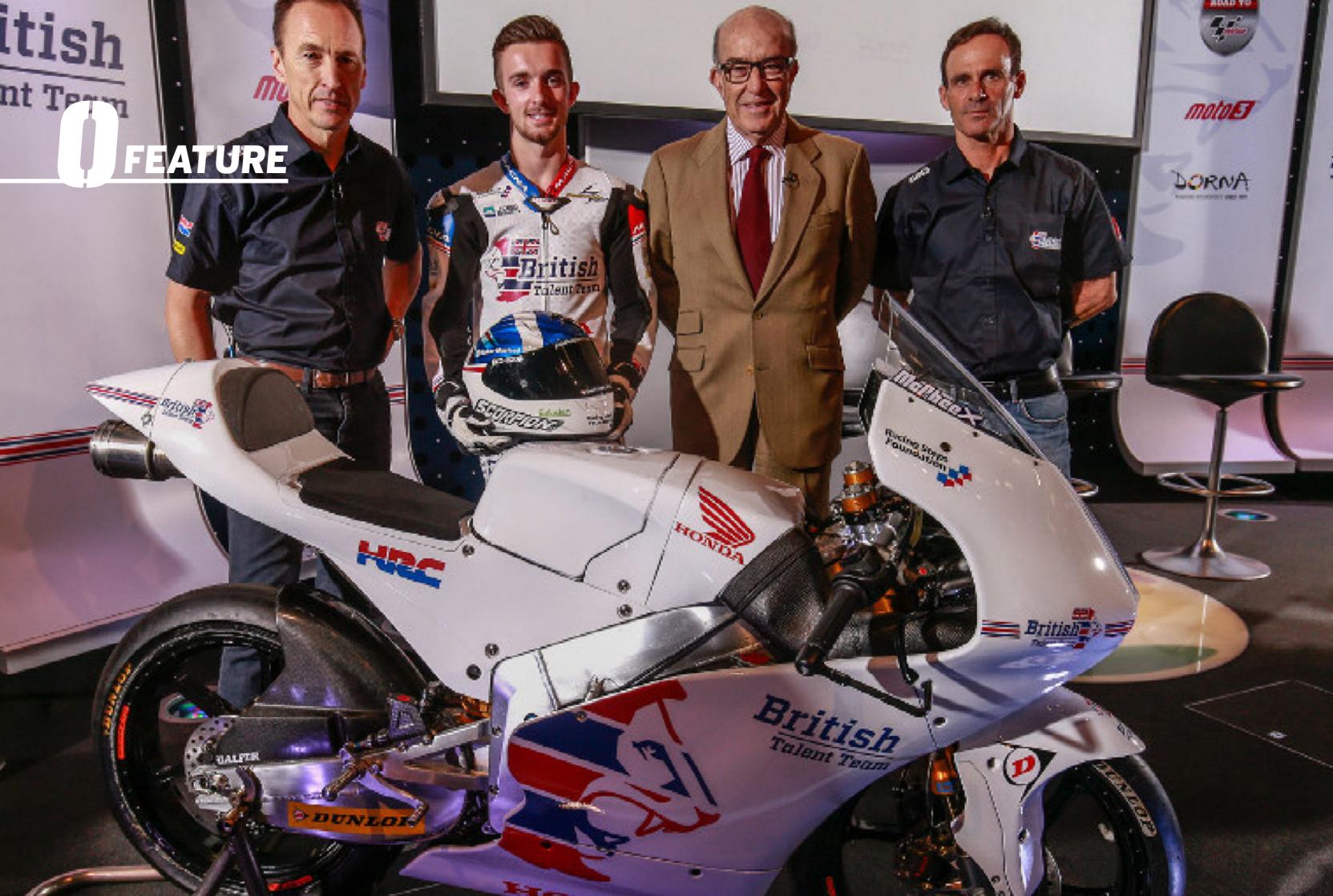
This is a hard question! I am older now and I feel more in control than when I was a rider. I am honestly happy with my career because I was world champion and if I didn't have that title then I would be very mad and bitter. I made many mistakes and I should have been world champion more times. I am OK with the one time. I think I am a bit better now. My job now is a little bit like that of a midwife! I have to help the guys to do everything that they can feel from the inside, take it and bring it out.

In the back of the BTT race truck Alberto Puig is a little anxious.

The Moto3 race at Silverstone has finished less than an hour ago and a disappointed John McPhee is getting packed up. The atmosphere is thick and the Spaniard ponders aloud whether it's the best place or time to be chatting. We go ahead anyway and Puig perches on a steel worktop.

Wearing an HRC shirt he fixes you with the type of steely expression that drove apprehension into MotoGP paddock personnel as he morphed from 500cc GP winner to Spanish talent finder and fixer to Dani Pedrosa's captain for almost ten years to the new head of the youth development schemes set-up by Dorna, principally the British project. Puig's intensity and clarity comes through immediately and is softened by frequent smiles and some amusing lines. It is easy to see how and why youngsters would want to race and show their best for him and then drink in the experience and nuance he can divulge. His record in sourcing the 'next crop' means he is the very first go-to in MotoGP for how he deals with aspirants. "The number one priority is the skill," he says, eyeballing. "Pure raw speed and talent. And from there you see if you can build it up. If there is no potential, no raw signs from things like the way the rider is positioned on the bike and the lap-time he can make then it will be difficult. Normally we try to look for this."





But do you also have to look for fire inside a kid? One that seems utterly determined...?

Of course, of course. Some guys want to listen to every word you say whereas others cannot wait for you to finish. There are guys with more skill and then those that want to work more: it's like there are two ways to approach the top. But if you don't have that high base of skill and potential then it's impossible. Good riders don't necessarily know they have skill they just get on the bike and it clicks. You cannot buy it and you don't ask for it: you either have it or you don't and from there you then have the work and the day-by-day job. There is passion for the sport and people who will work to be a good rider, but that special 'area' is necessary to go far.

You must see a variety of characters and personalities and then also have to watch them grow and change! It cannot be easy...

In my situation I have had the chance to work with many young kids and they are all different. But one thing is for sure is that the really good guys have an interest in what you say and between the ages of 13-16/17 they have an understanding and then develop by themselves and through racing every weekend. In the first stages of their career the good guys are 'normally' smart and want all the information they can get. It is also true that every rider has their own character and you can talk to one person in one way and another person a different way. As an adult you have to decide whom you can talk to 'straight' and who you have to take the long way to explain, so you have to adapt.

Did it take some time to develop the strategies to do this?

I try to be very straight and direct because I think this is the shortest way but the face you wear when you are talking to someone has to be different depending on the guy. The message will be the same though! Other guys [coaches] use different means to get the same result and I respect them. On some occasions you have to tell the rider what he needs to hear. I have done this many times. I have gone to a race with a kid and I believed we had no chance but I was making him believe he had the same chance as always. In this situation you might not get a win or a podium but it might not be the disaster you were expecting! Sometimes you have to lie...but in a good way always to keep the motivation.

Is that a hard part of the job?

For me the hardest part of the job is when we do many selections [events] and you have 100 kids and you have to say to 80 'thank you very much but...you have to keep trying'. I've done this job for many years and you never get used to it. It's really sad but life is like this.

Was there a big learning period for you?

Were there some mistakes?

Of course I made mistakes! If I didn't then I would not be here. When I look back then I know those mistakes but it is also true that I put a lot of passion into the job because I like racing and I like motorbikes. I had to stop racing because I had a massive crash but since I was seven I was racing motocross and many things. I put passion into what I do. I make errors but when I look at the riders I've helped then I know I have messed up sometimes but have also helped some really good guys. You cannot think 'I won't make mistakes' in a job like this.

What makes you a good coach?

I don't think I am good. I just...I think many ex-riders and ex-sportsmen maybe didn't have success because they did their sport but they didn't do it 'fully'. You have to do this fully. You have to give all you have to that rider, that situation, that race and that preparation of the team. If you do it and it's not your life then you won't get the result.

What is harder: picker up the athlete after injury or a lack of results, or when they are under pressure?

It is important when the form is gone – they are crashing or the results are not coming – you have to find a way to bring it back, sometimes by acting super-happy, sometimes lying, sometimes being angry. About pressure; top class athletes know they have to perform and they can handle it and they have the ability. The big job for people like me – at least in motorbike racing – is the period between 13-16 and when the kids start to race every weekend. You give them a bike and encourage them to learn and get out there and do it. From 17 onwards they already understand and will have done fifty-to-sixty races. They listen to you but they already have some confidence and know what they can or cannot do. There are many stories but I remember in the cases of Dani and Casey I was telling them at the age of thirteen that they will be world champion. They were looking at me as if to say 'f**k, what is this old man saying' but it is because you believe and you want to say 'let's start here and now'. It is a bit chaotic sometimes, it is a bit rock and roll but you must be there.

O FEATURE



Do you have to be careful about the advice you give sometimes? Does it have to be right?

Yes, there are many riders who will do exactly as you tell them so you have to be careful. I believe that you can talk about strategies and how to approach a race with a rider but the final instruction you have to leave because the rider is alone there with a bike and with thirty assholes around him trying to f***k him. There is a big general concept [to what he does] but the last piece...well, you cannot pretend to know everything because every race, every lap is a nightmare. It is a new story.

What keeps you going? You mentioned the passion for motorcycles but it is simply the satisfaction of watching a rider go all the way to the top?

Of course when I had my crash I was quite fast and I had to stop when I was not ready. I spoke with Dorna at the time and they asked me what I was going to do, so from day one I wouldn't have been able to do all this [the second phase of his career] without their support because they gave me a very good platform.

Also Honda: many riders and budgets to make teams. It was an impossible job by myself. I have fantastic partners. It is true when I look back and see the riders that were champions, well...this is the final target no? In the last few years I changed my approach because I don't focus on one rider any more. I was in the Repsol team for many years with Dani and other riders but now I try to help many guys and bring them up to a level. It's different. Before it was 24 hours with one guy and now it is a bit more global. If some of these guys grow then I will be just as happy.



A MILESTONE MOMENT

I don't want to get too carried away. But I also kinda want to. Another heavy milestone in the remarkable career of three times World Champion and twenty-two year old Jeffrey Herlings tumbled from the sky and planted deep into American soil this time with that Indiana victory last Saturday. The speed and form the Dutchman has developed in the second half of the Grand Prix season and with the KTM 450 SX-F gave plenty of hints that a 450MX debut success was a distinct possibility. Jeffrey is also normally not an athlete that hedges his bets. He would have entered the Ironman national and the final round of the US series knowing he had the kind of rhythm and feeling to do some damage.

I was sceptical that he could win like he did and with that amazing charge to make sure of a 1-1 scorecard – something he has managed just twice in sixteen rounds of MXGP this year – simply because Herlings would need to open the secrets of the Ironman course with minimal track time. On the other hand Jeffrey is a rapid learner. He was fast-tracked into Grand Prix by KTM, made his debut at fifteen, took Pole Position and his maiden podium in just his second GP and won on his third appearance. He has racked up wins and trophies at a prolific rate and was already high in the record books before he could legally buy a beer in the US.

He thrilled at the Motocross of Nations last year on what was his first major appearance on the 450. #84 hasn't hung around.

Herlings also has the conviction, conditioning, confidence, ability and relentlessness, not to mention that strand of arrogance that throbs from barely noticeable to noticeably egocentric, that defines his utter potential as a winner. The kid boasts the goods, the graft and the get-go.

Ironman was another entry in a career of highlights, prizes and decent contracts and earning power.

OK, the bigger picture had Eli Tomac aiming for the title and not the tease of victory and Marvin Musquin perhaps needed help from his KTM brandmate but the writing was on the wall for the luckless Frenchman from the middle of the season nevermind after the first moto when he needed to win and Tomac could have motored in the depths of the top twenty. Herlings was dealing with a pack that was lacked depth in full fitness and form and a collective perhaps glad to see-out the final ebbs of another long racing campaign.

By Adam Wheeler



He had the freedom, lack of pressure-and-expectancy and carried the excited verve that a debutant would enjoy in these situations: it is easy to imagine someone like Tomac or a fit Baggett, Anderson or Barcia reveling in the same circumstances at the end of the MXGP season and at a track that was open and inviting (and not rough and idiosyncratic as most European venues seem to be).

I don't want to downplay Jeffrey's achievement because it is stunning, and it is something he should always be proud of. It easily ranks with Christophe Pourcel's debut Supercross win in 2006 as an MX2 racer at the same time; although Herlings's feat was posted in the premier class of the outdoor series. It will sit as a bright feather in his orange cap.

Jeffrey's lows in a lifetime of highs have been well documented: brattish, rebellious behaviour, spats and an obsession with the spoils of the sport are all consequences of so-much-so-soon and growing up from his mid-teens

in the public eye surrounded by adoration and acclaim. Then there are the two serious injuries and a raft of smaller physical problems that rocked that outward confidence and chinked the flow of his Oakleys. However he matured and dealt with the adversity. When he talks now it is with a polished PR edge with the right words and graces but he is still honest with his emotions and feelings. At 22 he has been through a lot psychologically.

Make no mistake he is one of the supreme athletes and motorcycle racers of his generation. His sheer speed and reactions on the bike are gripping. I would place him in the same sphere of skills as Marc Marquez without a doubt. I would also – and have repeatedly told colleagues in road racing – suggest that watching Herlings in the sand is a bucket list sight for anyone with any vague interest or admiration for motorcycling.

This win must rank as one of his best and his favourites simply from the quantity of 'unknowns' he had to conquer.

He was spell-binding at Lierop to lap up to third place in 2012 he decimated rivals to the point where race reports could be written well before MXGP arrived at Valkenswaard for his home round (seven consecutive years of success) and he inspired at Charlotte last summer to clinch that elusive third title and defeat a Cooper Webb at the top of his game in the 250 division. These are just three of the instances that come to mind but Ironman will sit there with them.

What now for Herlings? Will he be lured by the prospect of more American glory? There is little doubt that the MXGP crown is his big target and he came into 2017 with an unusual amount of pressure having regularly beaten the last two champions – Romain Febvre and Tim Gajser – and with the knowledge that both claimed the No.1 plate at their first attempt. A broken hand and a humbling mini-period where he had to readjust to the demands of racing the 450 meant too many points were lost to a Cairoli blaring full song.

So Herlings needs to rule the world first and further boost his career stats, blossoming those numbers that he feels adds more credibility to his status. He tried a stint at the Supercross test tracks in 2011 and was bitten (the video is on Youtube) and has regularly stated his preference to be a homeboy rather than uproot his life to the other side of the globe.

Ironman will have raised his stock considerably in the eyes of an American audience and one of the biggest motorcycle markets in the world. It would have pumped his confidence that a challenge away from Grand Prix will not be an impossible task. Herlings initially made his breakthrough the same time as another teenage wonder Ken Roczen and the pair are only missing a couple of major accolades to complete an international set of championships. You wonder how wide-ranging their ambitions are: the talent certainly stretches far enough.







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O TEST

Words by Roland Brown,
Photos by Alessio Barbanti & Matteo Cavadini

SCRAMBLE FOR THIS



TRIUMPH STREET SCRAMBLER





Triumph's new Street Scrambler is well timed to thrive amid motorcycling's mania for retro streetbikes with an off-road look. Back in the Sixties, the old Triumph firm made some of the coolest bikes on the planet: fast, stripped-down 650cc parallel twins, based on models including the legendary Bonneville, that earned the nickname "desert sleds" as they were ridden and often raced across the rugged, open landscape of America's West Coast.

In recent years Triumph has enjoyed an unexpected benefit from those dirt warriors of half a century ago. When the Hinckley firm released a Bonneville-based Scrambler model a decade ago, it initially made little impression. But as the enthusiasm for old-style dirtbikes grew, the Scrambler soared in popularity, helped by appearances in movies and Doctor Who, plus association with stars including Steve McQueen and David Beckham.

These days rival manufacturers including Ducati and BMW have Scramblers of their own. And now Triumph's long-serving contender is replaced by the Street Scrambler, whose close resemblance to its predecessor belies the fact that it is a completely new bike. As the Street part of its name suggests, it's based on the Street Twin, the 900cc, entry-level roadster of Triumph's new liquid-cooled Bonneville family.

The newcomer's sohc, eight-valve parallel twin engine is identical to the Street Twin's, but breathes out through a new high-level exhaust system that doesn't affect the modest maximum output of 54bhp. The Street Scrambler's tubular steel frame comes from the same source, but the chassis is modified by the adoption of a wire-spoked front wheel that is 19 instead of 18 inches in diameter, and by longer forks and rear shock units.

TRIUMPH STREET SCRAMBLER





TRIUMPH STREET SCRAMBLER

"PERFORMANCE IS RESPECTABLE, IF ON THE GENTLE SIDE FOR A MACHINE WITH SUCH ADRENALINE-SOAKED HERITAGE... BUT TRIUMPH HAS A GOOD IDEA OF WHAT THEIR CUSTOMERS WANT."





As with other members of the new Bonnevile family, the Scrambler's new liquid-cooled status is accompanied by much improved level of finish. Neat details include aluminium headlamp brackets, rubber knee-pads and serrated footrests. The seat has an Alcantara style finish; its pillion pad unclips to be replaced by a luggage rack that is included in the price.

Despite the long-limbed look, that slim seat is fairly low, which helps to make the Street Scrambler manageable although at 213kg dry it's not particularly light. It also has plenty of parallel-twin character. The 270-degree crankshaft generates an appealingly off-beat pulse, and the side-by-side "shotgun" exhaust announces every blip of throttle with a rich thrapping sound.

Performance is respectable, if on the gentle side for a machine with such adrenaline-soaked heritage.

Fuelling is crisp, the five-speed gearbox changes sweetly, and the Triumph pulls so effortlessly from low revs that its lack of tachometer is not a problem. The bike stays stable on straights and through curves, cruises smoothly at 80mph, and accelerates gently from there to a top speed of about 100mph.

Handling is good, the fairly short-travel suspension (an unchanged 120mm at each end, despite the longer legs) helping ensure that the Street Scrambler feels more like a typical roadster than an adventure bike. Road-biased Metzeler Tourance tyres give plenty of grip, and there's plenty of ground clearance. Stopping power from the single, 310mm front disc and twin-piston Nissin caliper is very adequate.



The digital panel can display info ranging from consumption and remaining range to engine speed, viewable by toggling the "i" button on the left bar. There are more than 150 accessories, from heated grips and bench seat to centre-stand and alternative silencer.

Those extras are likely to be popular, to personalise a bike that cynics might say was designed as much for posing as for performance. Certainly, this modern reincarnation of Triumph's famed desert sleds won't be winning races across the Mojave Desert, or leaping fences in the style of McQueen in *The Great Escape*. It would be great to see Triumph honour its Sixties heritage with a more powerful and dirt-ready Scrambler, using the 1200cc Bonneville engine.

But Triumph has a good idea of what its customers want, and the stylish, capable and user-friendly Street Scrambler looks set to be even more popular than the outgoing Scrambler, despite its higher price (£8900 in the UK). Deservedly so, too. Behind that familiar look and layout, it's an enjoyable and much improved machine.



The chassis gets a very different test off-road. Although the Street Scrambler makes no pretence at being a genuine dual-purpose bike, it handles light rough pretty well. Its soft power delivery helps the Metzeler find grip, at least on dry surfaces, and its reasonably well-damped suspension and low centre of gravity make the bike usefully controllable despite the lack of travel.

Before heading off-road it's advisable to disable the traction control and ABS, as both are relatively simple road-based systems that aren't designed for dirt. Anyone wanting a bike for serious off-road use should look elsewhere, but the Street Scrambler is happy to tackle dirt tracks at a decent pace, albeit with an occasional clonk as its suspension allows the plastic bash-plate under the engine to touch down.

Back on Tarmac, the Triumph is respectably practical. Its engine's impressive economy (60mpg is typical) allows a range of roughly 150 miles.



WorldSBK

PROSECCO DOC GERMAN ROUND

LAUSITZRING · AUGUST 19-20

Race one winner: Chaz Davies, Ducati

Race two winner: Chaz Davies, Ducati





WORLDSBK GER

DAVIES KEEPES AT IT

Gallery & Blog by Graeme Brown/GeeBee images



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NO LAUSITZING MATTER...

With the WorldSBK summer break over action got back under way at Lausitzring in Germany. A few weeks ago it was announced that the German circuit had been sold in its entirety to DEKRA, the German automotive inspection agency, and that racing would stop at the end of 2017. There was a collective cheer amongst riders, teams and press involved in WorldSBK that I am sure would have registered on the Richter Scale.

There is no real need to talk about the racing – you can guess what happened. TV commentator Greg Haines opened the debate on Twitter again about ‘what has to be done in WorldSBK’ basically asking the question why so many people who are never there and have no experience of the series are so highly critical.

I consider Greg’s view quite balanced. As a former Dorna employee who worked in MotoGP for several years his views are unbiased. Really worth a follow on social media for one, but he raises the issue that I spoke about in the last blog that indeed there are a collective who have so much to say about the situation but have no experience. That doesn’t mean to say their view is not relevant and indeed it may give some fuel to Dorna to bring changes to the

series to raise its appeal. I feel, however, it is very disrespectful to those working and racing in the paddock. It almost suggests that their success is not gained through a lot of hard work and professionalism but because others are being penalized by the rules.

I dipped into another separate debate on social media recently that suggested there was no more professional ‘sport’, it was all just entertainment. What you have is an entertainment product that has to be sold, managed, marketed and delivered to an ever more fickle public.

This is currently where some people are viewing WorldSBK and losing sight of the sporting achievements. I heard an interesting theory from someone else involved in the TV coverage of WorldSBK

who suggested that Dorna may be keeping a lid on it to make the most of the current success of MotoGP. If the wheel turned and MotoGP loses its shine then they have WorldSBK just bubbling away ready to be thrust into the lime-light when needed.

The other side of the picture comes from those who invest in the sport. One person who has personally supported and managed riders across BSB, WorldSBK and MotoGP for a number of years has been incredibly frustrated at the current weekend schedule in WorldSBK. They cannot fathom the reason to persist with the two-day race format for the Super-bikes and the lack of track time that WorldSSP300 riders have. Looking for funding from outside the motorcycle industry, MotoGP and BSB are currently a better sell

By Graeme Brown



for companies as both track time and TV coverage are more favourable, especially when supporting a young developing rider.

An interesting comment made related to horse racing. Promoters at racing tracks don't need spectators at the event to make money if they are able to sell live TV coverage. With WorldSBK, my understanding is that the two-day race format is to facilitate live TV slots for both Superbike races on Saturday and Sunday. If Dorna are making money from the series by selling TV packages maybe they are content with the situation at the moment and the theory that they are actually happy with the current level begins to hold some sway.

The main point is that the issue is clearly too complicated for one simple solution. For now I think we should just appreciate the level of performance we are witnessing. Much the same way people did with Michael Doohan in the 1990's.

Looking ahead there was surprisingly little gossip at the weekend over rider movements and actual changes for the future. It would

appear that the ECU issue won't be resolved until next year and the introduction of a stock unit won't come before 2019. As an interim change there may be an engine rev limit imposed. I am not sure what difference that will bring but personally with the same riders on the same bikes next year I can't really see anything radical happening.

After the test at Lausitz during the break I had thought that the Milwaukee Aprilia team would be challenging for a podium at the race. Eugene Laverty was consistently on the same pace as the Kawasaki's and Ducati's during the test but the team experienced a few gremlins and, aside from Lorenzo Savadori's third place in Superpole, they didn't fully realize their potential. Laverty was generally confident that they had made a step forward at the test so fingers crossed we will see them get all their ducks in a row at Portimao in a few weeks time.

Portimao may see some other curious developments. There is a one day test on the Monday after the race and it has been rumoured that Yamaha and Honda will be

the ones with the most work to do. Coming fresh from their stunning win at the Suzuka 8hr race, Yamaha riders Alex Lowes and Michael VD Mark are keen to see how the Japanese factory spec bike would run on Pirelli tyres (they ran Bridgestone at Suzuka). By all accounts Yamaha are making moves to bring that machine to Portugal and do some back to back testing with the current race bike in the hope that it will reduce the small gap they currently have to the leading two manufacturers. Honda on the other hand are in a state of limbo. It was confirmed that they have not renewed the option on Stefan Bradl for 2018 and I would doubt that Davide Giugliano will stay in place for next year as well. It would seem that the team and Honda Europe are keen to test the Magneti Marelli electronics system and we may see Giugliano and test rider Magnoni running that package to gather data for a potential change in 2018.

For now this is my opportunity for a short holiday before ironically heading to the holiday central in the Algarve for the next race.



WORLDSBK GER





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**ON
TRACK
OFF
ROAD**



'On-track Off-road' is a free, bi-weekly publication for the screen focussed on bringing the latest perspectives on events, blogs and some of the very finest photography from the three worlds of the FIM Motocross World Championship, the AMA Motocross and Supercross series' and MotoGP.

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